



**REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR-LESTE
V GOVERNO CONSTITUCIONAL
GABINETE SECRETARIA ESTADO DA PROMOÇÃO DA IGUALDADE**

Statement

**By
H.E. Sra Idelta Maria Rodrigues
Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality**

**To the
57th Session
of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**On the
Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence
against women and girls**

**United Nations, New York
4-15 Mar 2013**

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to share an update from my country on the Elimination and Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls. The Government of Timor-Leste is committed to advancing equality between women and men, and eliminating gender-based violence. A section on Combating Domestic Violence and the introduction of a national zero-tolerance policy for violence in schools and homes are in Timor-Leste's National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030.

Statistics from our Demographic Health Survey in 2010 indicates that 38% of Timorese women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and that the main perpetrators are husbands or intimate partners. Domestic violence is the most common form of gender-based violence. The Survey also shows that only 27% of women could rely on family members to provide shelter for them for a few nights if they were forced to move from their home because of violence, and even less – only 20%, could rely on their families to financially support them if needed.

A Law against DV entered into force July 2010, after 10 years of development. The first meeting to start the process was organised in late 2000 by the Office Advisor to the Prime Minister for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), and the East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (FOKUPERS), with the support of UNFPA. I am pleased that a representative of Fokupers is present at this Commission on the Status of Women, along with another NGO representative from PRADET who was a Panelist on the session on Multi-sectoral Services and Responses on 6 March.

The following years consisted of extensive national and district consultations, including key actors such as the Church, which proved essential. The final draft of the law took into account the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its General Recommendation on VAW.

The law provides for legal protection, legal remedies and the establishment of shelters and support services for survivors of DV. It has a broad definition of violence, encompassing physical, sexual, psychological and economic forms, and applies to acts committed in a family context, with or without cohabitation, where there exists physical or economic influence, within the family or intimate relationship. This includes children and domestic workers.

It also defines the responsibilities of the Government, including the establishment of reception centres and shelters; a telephone hotline; specialised hospital and police services; social and legal assistance; support of victims including maintenance, personal and professional development and social reintegration; and the rehabilitation of offenders.

The law sends a clear message of the public nature of DV, where anyone can report the crime, whether they are directly involved or not.

In May 2012, A National Plan of Action on GBV was completed and approved by the Council of Ministers. It has three Strategic Priority Areas: Prevention, Protection, and Legal Assistance. The NAP underwent wide consultations with government institutions, civil society, and service providers over a period of nearly a year. This Plan is Timor-Leste's first multi-sectoral approach to addressing GBV and it identifies short and long-term goals for the next three years and how we will work together through Inter-Ministerial Commission in the education, social services, justice, security and health sectors, to reach these goals in coordination with civil society and our Ombudsman for Human Rights.

In the area of prevention, efforts to uncover the root causes of VAW, and research on Bride-Price and DV was commissioned by Fokupers. It looked to

understand the use and misuse of the symbolic value of bride-price, impacts on the role of women, women's voice and that of her clan, the financially binding implications on families and the resulting penalties when a woman tries to exit an abusive marriage.

Persistent challenges in combating GBV and VAW remain. There is a continued reluctance from victims to report due to cultural norms and practices, and there remain long waits to access justice due to the large volume of pending cases, and weak case management and tracking, and linked to this, sustained capacity-building of all service providers is still needed. Stable and sufficient funding for victim services requires sustained attention by government, civil society, the women's movement, and donors.

I would like to share a quote from our Prime Minister, HE Xanana Gusmão at the Closing of an International Conference on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, held in Dili last week. He affirmed that the next MDG framework "must properly recognize, and take into account, the vitally important role that women play in development, and we must tackle violence against women." In light of this, the Government of Timor-Leste strongly supports the adoption of an Outcome Document by all CSW member states.

I am looking forward to the discussions and learning more from my colleagues from around the world on tackling violence against women. Our vision is for a gender-fair society where human dignity, human rights and women's rights are valued, protected, and promoted by its laws and culture.

Thank you.